

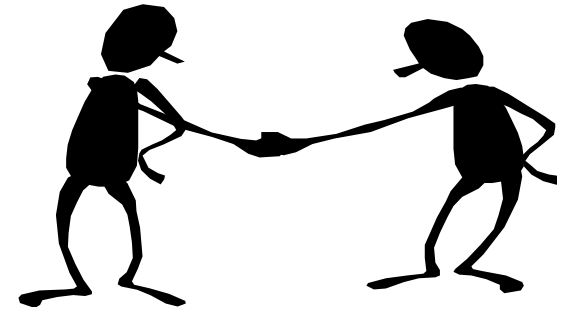
# Effective Transitions for Children with Special Needs from Preschool to Kindergarten

**Beth Rous**

**University of Kentucky**



# Welcome!



- ☺ Please make yourself comfortable.
- ☺ Caffeine is available if you're still asleep!
- ☺ Have fun as we learn together!
- ☺ I am glad you're here...

*Beth*



# Participant Outcomes.....

- Examine current research for Pre-k to K transition
- Explore practices that promote the successful transition of children from diverse cultures and children with significant special needs;
- Identify tools and strategies for use at a local level to promote the successful transition
- Promote the inclusion of families in preschool children's transition to kindergarten;
- Utilize effective research, curriculum, and strategies to improve educational, social, and emotional outcomes.



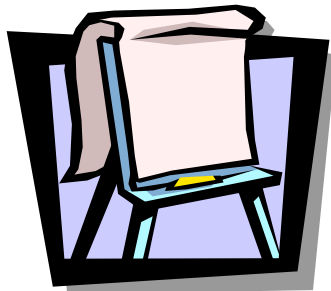
# Agenda

- Context, Conceptual Models and Transition Outcomes
- Research on Benefits of Transition Planning and Transition Practices
- Policies and Regulations
- Socio-cultural Factors that Impact Transitions
- Identifying Key Practices and Supporting Strategies



# Resources and Materials

- Handout Packet (HP)
- Activity and Forms Packet
- Resource Packet (RP)



= Large or Small Group Activity....

Reference to page numbers in packets  
Handout Packet page 2

HP 2



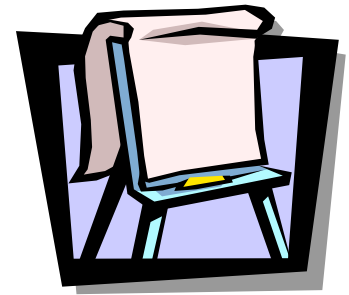
# Context, Conceptualization and Outcomes

What is transition, how should it be conceptualized and what outcomes are we looking for?



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# Setting the Context

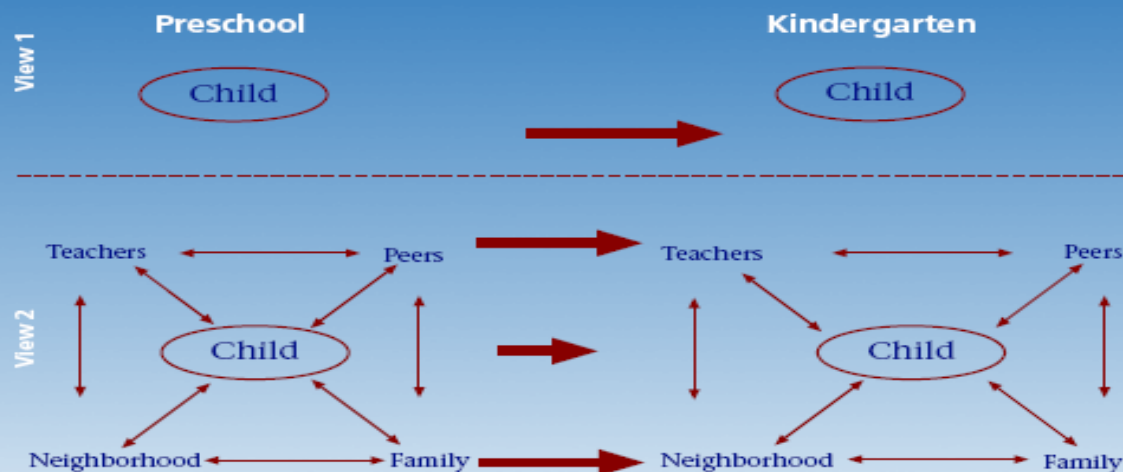
- How are you defining transition?
- Why is transition planning important?
- What populations do you serve?
- What outcomes do we hope to achieve as a result of effective transition planning?





# Conceptual Models of Transition

## Contrasting Views of the Transition Process



*Transition has to be understood in terms of the settings that contribute to child development (e.g., family, classroom, community) and the connections among these settings (e.g., family-school relationships) at any given time and across time.*

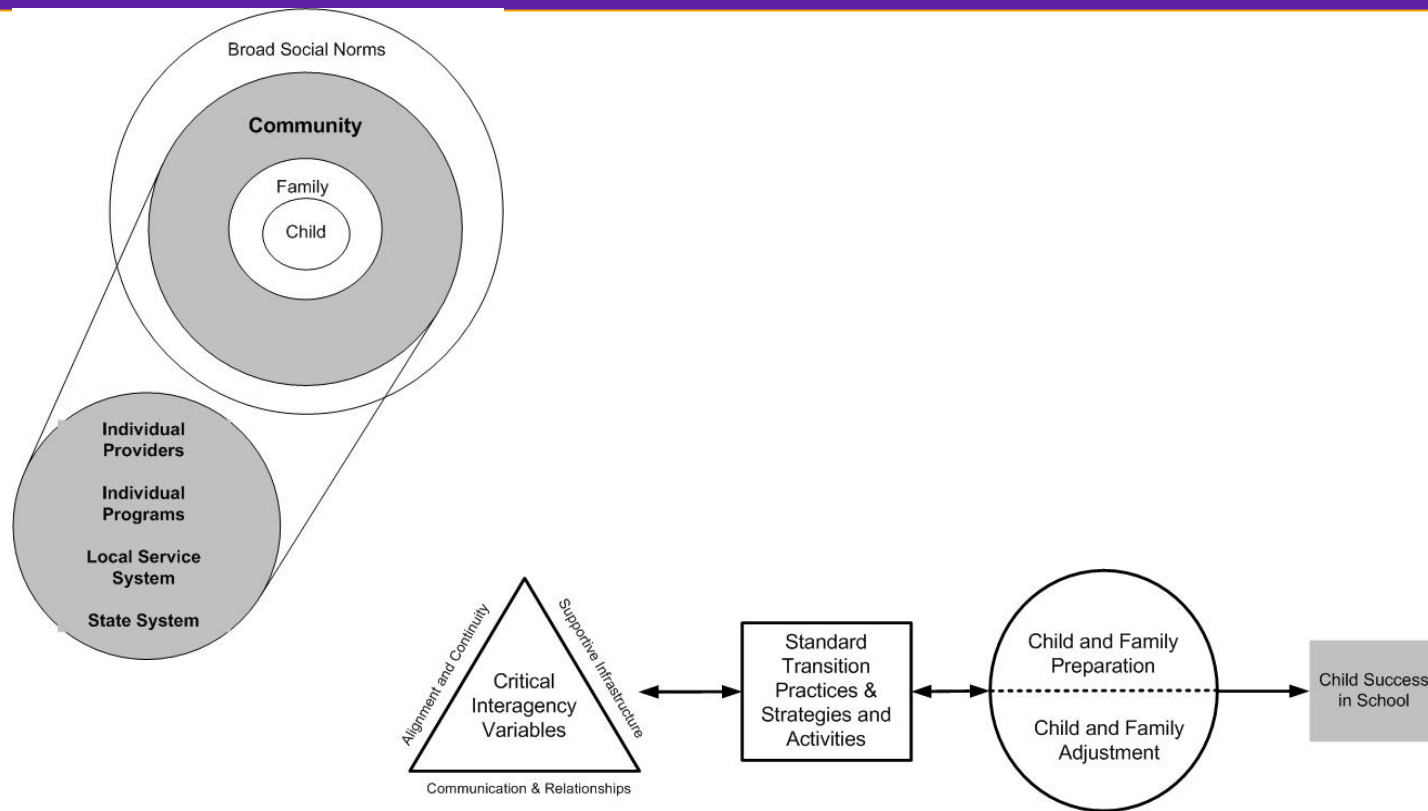


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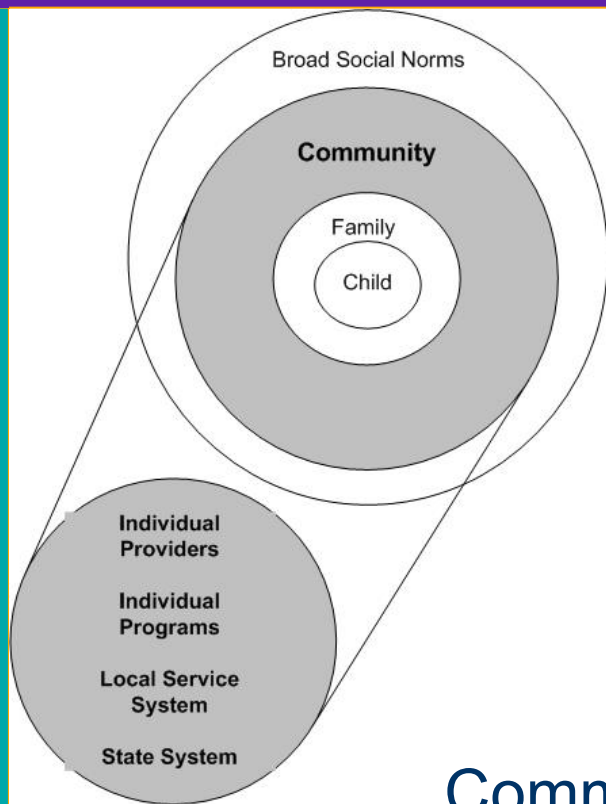




# Conceptual Models for Transition



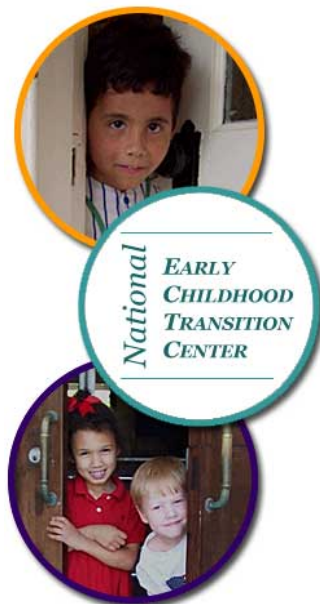
# Conceptual Framework



- Contextual Factors From an Ecological Perspective
  - Bioecological Theory
  - Organizational Systems Theory

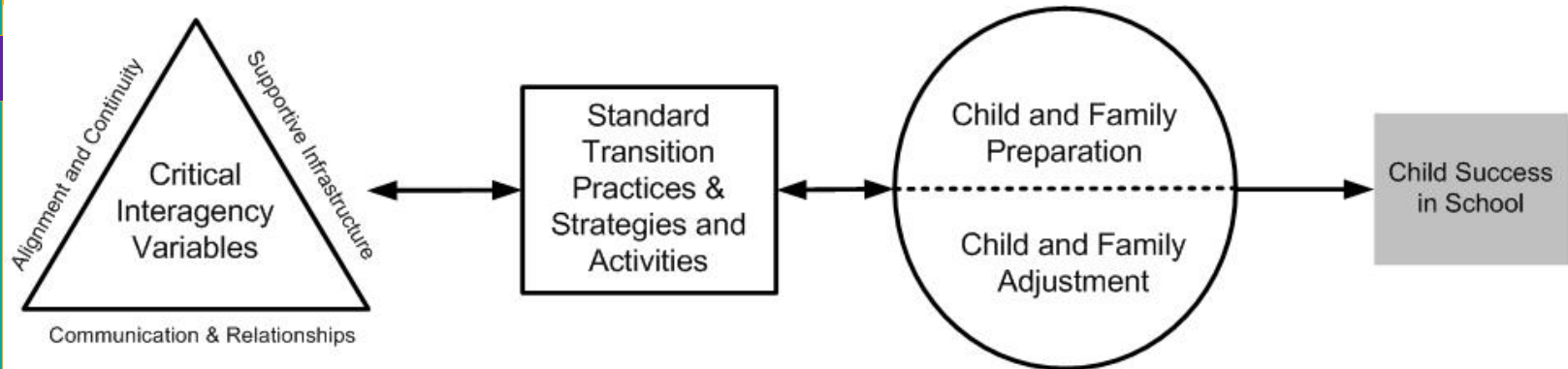
Community Defined

Rous, Hallam, Harbin, McCormick & Jung, 2005



# The Transition Process

## Key Elements of Transition Process for Both Sending and Receiving Agencies



**1. Types of learning experiences, appropriateness of the curriculum, expectations**  
**2. Ongoing at all levels of the system**  
**3. Policies, interagency agreements, formal/informal supports (e.g., interagency councils).**

**Child, Family, Staff, Program and Community**

**Program visits, open house, cross agency training transition fair, parent handbooks.....**

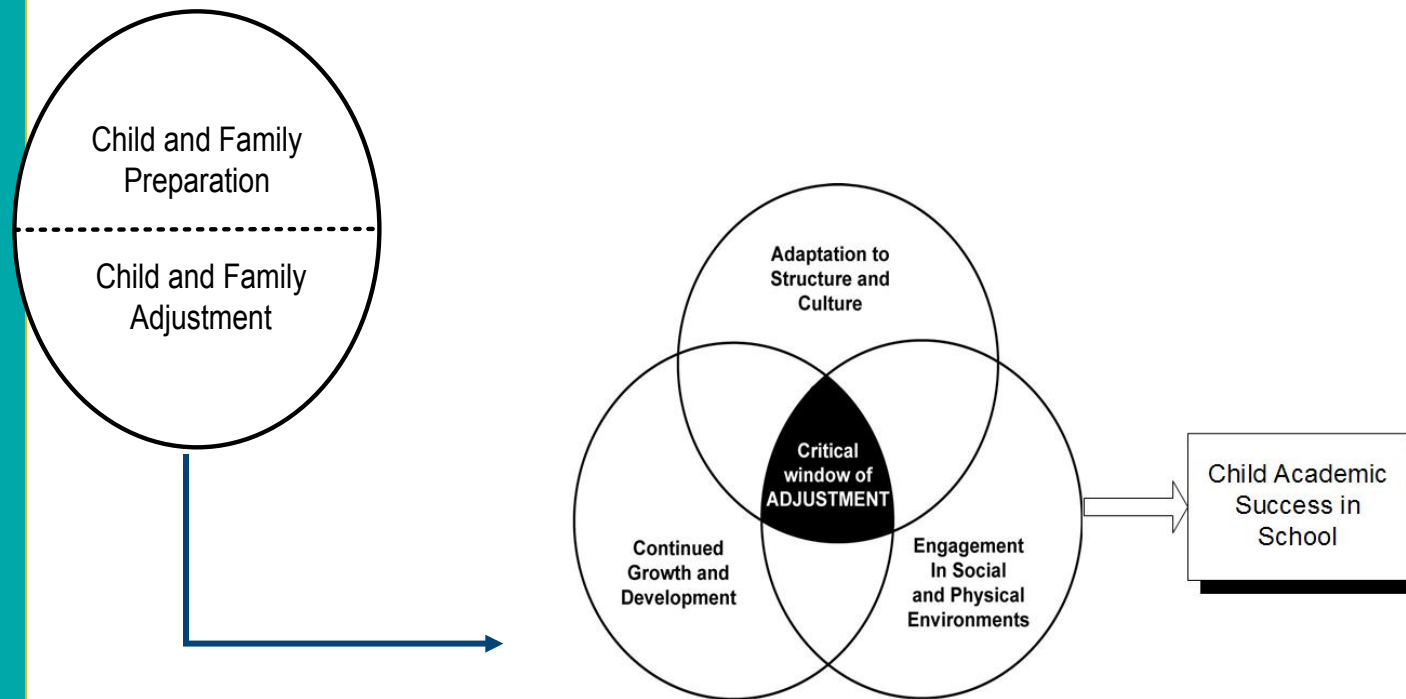
**Results and degree to which child and families are prepared for and adjust to the new environment**

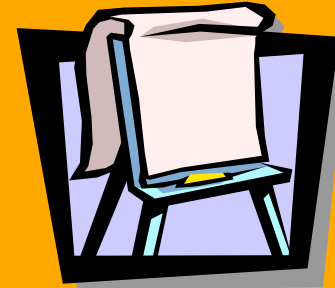


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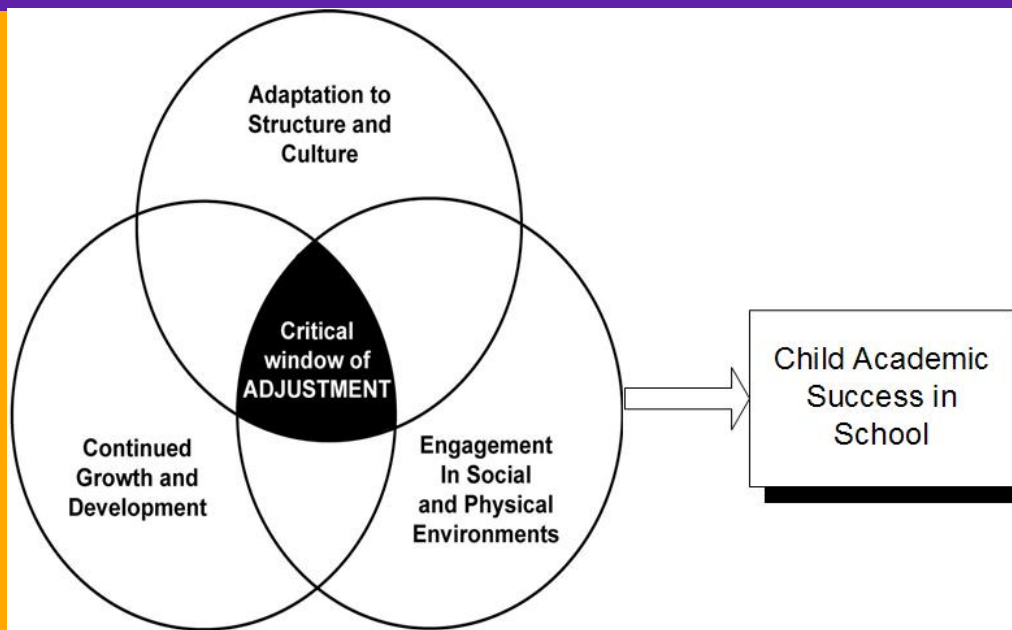
# Measuring Transition Outcomes for Children



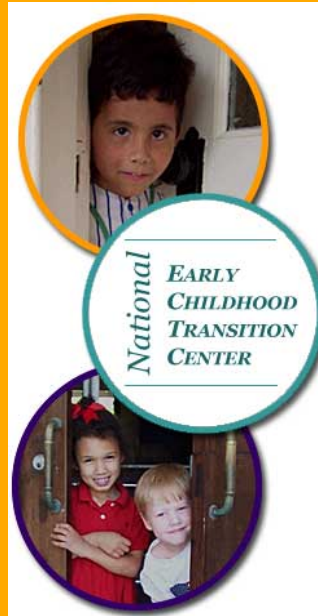


# Measuring Transition Outcomes

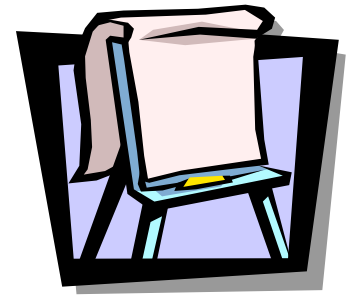
Define it?



How can this framework be used to support transition planning?



Rous, McCormick, Hallam and Harbin, 2006



# What Model Will You Use?

- What do these models tell us about our transition efforts?
- What are the similarities and differences between these models?
- What outcome are you hoping to achieve with more focused transition planning?



# Why? and What?

Benefits of Transition  
Planning and Practices  
that Support Transition



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# Presenting the Research

## Why?

Benefits of Transition  
Planning

## What?

Transition Practices  
and Activities at  
Different Levels

Child

Family

Program

Community

State



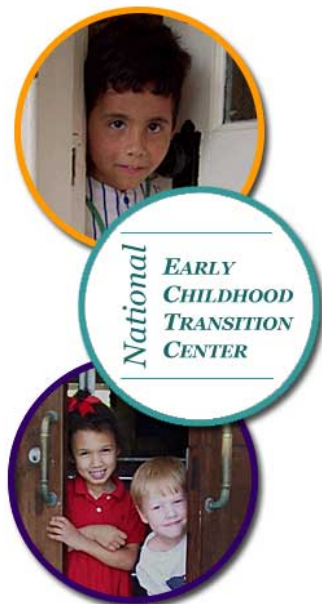
# Setting the Context

- Scientifically-based Practices
  - validated by research
- Evidence-based Practices
  - best available research
  - professional wisdom & experience
  - consumer values
- Recommended Practices
  - set of practices designed to inform decisions about services



# Current Research Available

- Most of what we currently know about **transition for children** is based on four large scale studies:
  - National Head Start/ Public School Transition Study (Ramey et al., 2000)
  - Transition at Kindergarten from NCEDL (Pianta et al., 2002)
  - Transition to Preschool from NECTC (Rous, Hallam & McCormick, 2005)
  - Effect of Transition on Child Outcomes (Schulting, Malone & Dodge, 2005)



## Study 1: Ramey, et al., 2000

- National Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Demo Project
- Sample of 4,284 kindergartners
  - Head Start graduates and their caregivers
  - 28 sites; 435 schools; 81 districts; 28 states
- Instrumentation
  - Measures of (1) family ecology, (2) child – PPVT & academic status, and (3) child and family PERCEPTIONS of school adjustment & attitudes toward school



# Results

- 76% of the children reported liking school a lot (considered by the authors as reflective of positive transitions)
- More than 30% of the families reported some strategy for promoting positive school experiences and transition to school



# Results

- Key indicators of a successful transition to kindergarten include:
  - Families show positive attitudes toward school and learning
  - Teachers recognize and value difference and provide DAP
  - Linkage of all stakeholders in positive and mutually supporting focused efforts



# Study 2: Schulting, Malone & Dodge, 2005

- Effect of Transition Policies and Practices on Child Academic Outcomes
- Sample
  - 17,212 children from in ECLS-K (1998-99)
  - 2,991 teachers
  - 992 schools (914 public and 363 private)
- Hierarchical linear modeling
  - Academic achievement (reading, math and general knowledge)
  - Parent reported involvement
  - School transition practices (7)
  - Co-variants (e.g., academic, child and family, school, teacher and classroom)





# Transition Practices

- Information about K phoned or sent home
- Preschoolers spend time in the K classrooms
- School days are shortened at beginning of year
- Parents and children visit K before school starts
- Teachers visit student homes before school starts
- Parents attend orientation before school starts
- Other transition activities provided



# Results

- Kindergarten transition practices have a modest positive effect:
  - Academic achievement at the end of Kindergarten
  - Parent-initiated school involvement
- The effect of transition practices on achievement is stronger for children from average or low-income families
- Low-income children receive the fewest transition practices



# Study 3: Pianta et al., 2002

- NCEDL – Transition to Kindergarten
- Sample
  - Random stratified from population of 17,000 with final sample of 3,595 teachers
- Instrumentation (Survey)
  - Included 21 transition to kindergarten practices
  - Included 16 potential barriers to transition to kindergarten



# Results

- Most common practices were:
  - Talk with families AFTER school starts
  - Letter to families AFTER school begins
  - Open house AFTER school starts
- Least common practices were:
  - home visiting (before or after)
  - a visit to the preschool



# Study 4: Rous, Hallam & McCormick, 2005

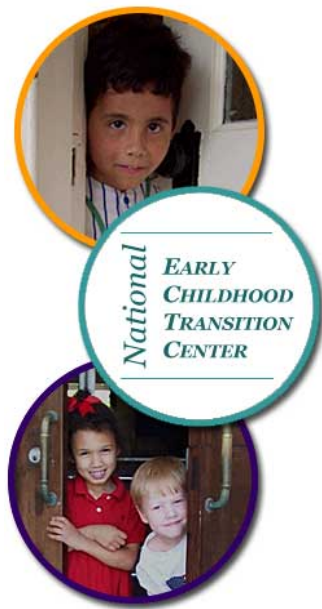
- NECTC National Preschool Survey
- Random stratified from population of 10,000 with final sample of 2,433 teachers
  - Teaching 3-, 4-, or 5-year-olds who are not enrolled in Kindergarten
- Survey of 51 questions and one open comment
  - 25 questions which identify transition practices to determine rate of use by preschool teachers
  - 22 factors to identify what preschool teachers report as barriers or facilitators for transition to preschool



# Transition Practices to Preschool\*

- Most Common:
  - Talk with parents AFTER school starts★
  - Letter to parents AFTER school starts★
  - Talk with parents BEFORE school starts
- Least Common:
  - Teachers visit sending program classroom
  - Call child AFTER school starts★
  - Call child BEFORE school starts★

\* Additional findings are available on NECTC website.



# Commonly Reported Facilitators

- Parents interested
- Class lists generated on time
- Parents bring children for registration/  
open house
- Funds available
- Summer work supported with salary





# Transition Practices to K

- Most Common
  - Information about K phoned or sent home
  - Children visit K classrooms
  - Continuity in the curriculum
  - Children visit K teachers
- Least Common
  - Home visits by the teacher
  - Shortened school days



# Smaller Scale Research Studies

- Fowler, S.A., Chandler, L.K., Johnson, T.E., & Stella, E. (1988)
- Hains, A.H., Fowler, S.E., Schwartz, I., Kottwitz, E. & Rosenkoetter, S. (1989)
- Harbin, G., McWilliam, R., & Gallagher (2000)
- Hanline, M. F. (1993)
- Kagan, S. L., & Neuman, M. J. (1998)
- LaParo, K. M., Pianta, R.C., & Cox, M. (2000)
- Rosenkoetter, S. E., Hains, A. H., Fowler, S. A. (1994)
- Rous, B., Schuster, J., & Hemmeter, M. L. (1999)
- Thurman, S.K. (1997)



# What we know about children

- Child....
  - Experience interacting with adults
  - Familiarity with cooperating
  - Experience following directions

Are important to a successful transition



# What we know about families

- Family involvement in the school and in their child's education makes a difference.
- All families should have a personal contact with the school (preferably with the child's teacher) before school starts that is low stress and designed for the school to LISTEN to the parents.



# What we know about families

- Families can be involved by preparing children for classroom work in several ways such as reading to children, visiting a library, participating in story time, singing songs, playing games, and conversing regularly about day-to-day activities.



# What we know about programs

- A regular routine or schedule of some sort so children have a sense of routine and predictability helps promote successful transition
- Teachers must:
  - communicate with one another and the family about the child's needs and about the classroom experiences that are and will be offered in their settings.
  - visit each other's classrooms.
  - meet to connect their curriculum and expectations to one another and meet with parents to talk about the transition needs of individual children.

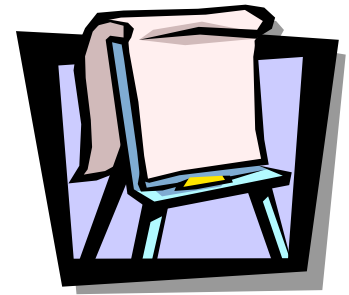


# What we know about communities

- Communities must develop transition plans, processes, and evaluation of transition plans and identify who is responsible for implementing these plans.
- A variety of transition strategies need to be offered to families and tailored to meet their individual needs rather than implementing a one-size-fits-all program.







# Using the Research....

- What are the key “take home” messages that the research tell us?
- What transition practices seem to be most important for implementation?
- What transition practices are most likely to happen?
- How can we promote the use of those practices that are not likely to happen?



# Policies and Regulations

Policies and Regulations that influence the transition process.

Resource Packet



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# Increased Emphasis On:

- School Readiness
  - Ready Children
  - Ready Schools
  - Ready Communities
- Accountability
  - Child and Family Outcomes
  - Documenting Success



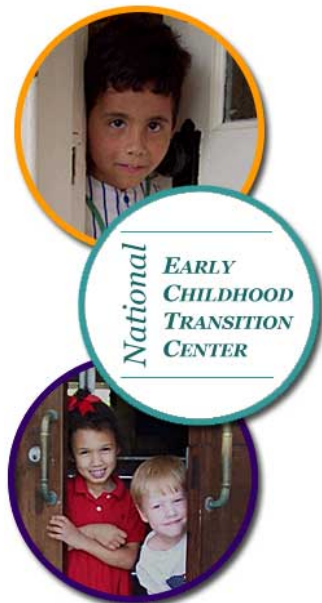
# National Education Goals Panel

- By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.
- What did this mean?
- How would we know?



# NEGP Conceptualization of Readiness

- Ready Schools
  - Transition & continuity
  - Committed to success for all children and teachers
  - Work toward raising achievement
  - Adapt new practices
  - Accept responsibility for results
  - Have strong leadership



# NEGP Conceptualization of Readiness

- Child Dimensions
  - Physical well-being and motor development
  - Social & emotional development
  - Approaches toward learning
  - Language development
  - Cognition and general knowledge



# Federal and State Policies

- No Child Left Behind – Good Start Grow Smart
- Head Start
- IDEA



# No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

## Public Law 107-110

- Emphasizes coordination between Head Start, Early Reading First, and other early childhood programs and the public schools, especially:
  - With parent consent, receiving records
  - Establishing channels of communication
  - Conducting meetings to discuss the needs of individual children
  - Organizing & participating in joint transition-related training of personnel
  - Linking educational services

(Section 1120B)





# Head Start Transition Requirements

- Disability Service Plan – 45 CFR 1308 (Subpart B)
  - For grantees, not individual children
  - Procedures for transition from Part C and to LEA or other next placement
  - Preparation of parents and staff for the transition
  - Interagency agreements as appropriate to support coordination of services and transition
  - Screening and referrals
- Performance Standards – 45 CFR 1304-A
  - Refer to LEA for evaluation (Subpart D)
  - Support parents through transition (Subpart G)
  - Help facilitate transition (Subpart G)



# IDEA 2004

- Birth to Five Service Systems Option
- Initial IEP Meeting
  - invite a representative of the EI system
  - promote discussion related to transition
  - must consider the child and family's IFSP
- LEA participation in Transition Conference
- Underscored Need for Collaboration



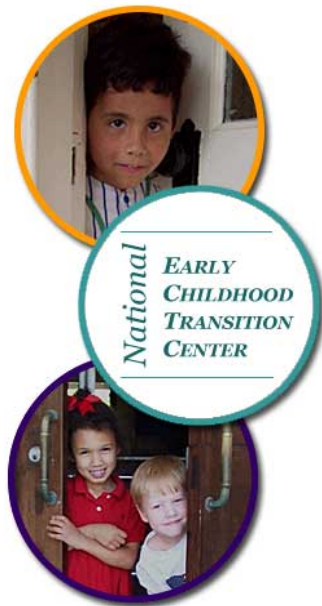
# Research to Support Policy

- Hains, A.H., Fowler, S.E., Schwartz, I., Kottwitz, E. & Rosenkoetter, S. (1989)
- Harbin, G., McWilliam, R., & Gallagher (2000)
- Hanline, M. F. (1993)
- Kagan, S. L., & Neuman, M. J. (1998)
- LaParo, K. M., Pianta, R.C., & Cox, M. (2000)
- Rous, B., Schuster, J., & Hemmeter, M. L. (1999)



# What We Know About Communities and Local Policies

- Collaboration with schools in developing and implementing transition plans requires flexibility and sensitivity to the unique perspectives and constraints of the program involved.
- Schools and programs can, with little addition financial resources, implement a transition planning process that results in each school or program developing their own transition plan.



# Complex Socio-cultural Factors that Impact Transitions

Addressing the needs of children from low-income families and/or culturally diverse backgrounds and those with significant disabilities



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# What the Research Says

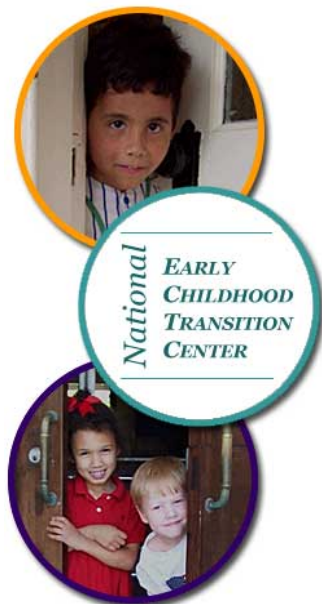
- Some demographic factors have been found to influence the use of transition practices particularly SES status (low-income)
  - *“children who are likely to benefit most from personalized, proactive, and intense practices aimed at facilitating transition to kindergarten are the least likely to be the recipients of such practices”* (Pianta et al., page 83)
  - *“the impact of these [school transition] practices is greatest for the low-income children who are least likely to receive them”* (Schulting et al., page 870)



# What the Research Says....

- Many transition barriers and issues are similar across populations, however the perceived intensity of the issue is greater in some cases
- There are some common barriers that more specifically affect the transition process for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and/or those with significant disabilities

(Stricklin, Hains, Rous & Schroeder, 2005).





# Children from Culturally or Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds

- Lack of effective or qualified interpreters for families from linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Recruiting and retaining staff who are familiar with the language and culture of the family served
- Communication gap among families, teachers, and therapists, including the use of jargon





# Children from Culturally or Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds

- A lack of resources available in the family's native language
- Transition information and materials not translated into the family's native language
- Children sometimes do not have complete assessment information or an assessment that meets the needs of the new environment thus making placement difficult



# Children from Culturally or Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds

- Specific to children with disabilities:
  - Families do not always accept that their child has a disability and needs services
  - A lack of persons to help bilingual children who have disabilities adjust to their new environment
  - Discrepancy between traditional cultural beliefs and educational services, especially concerning special education services



# Children with Significant Disabilities

- A lack of support for families who have medically fragile children and need respite care



# Issues that Cross Populations

- Fears and anxieties of family members about the transition process and their child's move to the next environment
- Other providers and physicians who do not work in the schools provide recommendations for programming that are not consistent with the educational model



# Issues that Cross Populations

- Changes in frequency and intensity of services as children transition into new environments
- Difficult to obtain records from families that are transitory
- Philosophical and institutional differences between environments (early intervention, preschool, kindergarten)

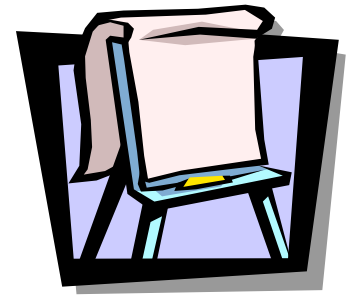


# Issues that Cross Populations

- Challenging to assess children from non-English speaking families
- Shortage of available health providers, therapists, and teachers in rural areas resulting in a wait for services
- Federal and state regulations for many areas pertaining to transition are interpreted differently across districts

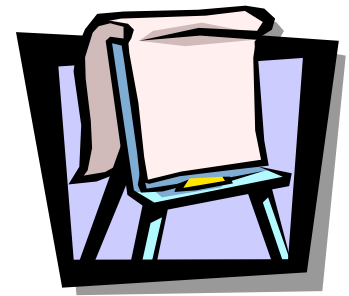


# Additional Socio-Cultural Factors To Consider?????



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- Identify issues or barriers that are most salient to you.





# Situation 1

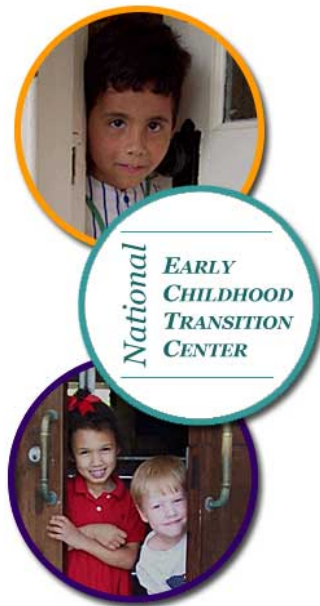
Mrs. Martino teaches in Metroville in the preschool program. This spring, Alex's mother, Monica, approached Mrs. Martino about how the staff were helping Alex get ready for kindergarten in the fall and how she could help Alex. Mrs.

Martino was a bit stumped. She and her assistant teacher had talked about the transition to kindergarten a little, and she knew it was important, but she really had not thought about how the family could help. Mrs. Martino looked through all of her orientation materials and the program policies and procedures but could not find any information on what she was expected to do for transition planning.



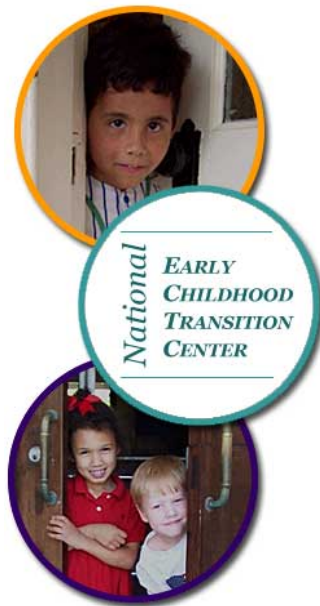
# The Result

A lack of policies or materials leaves Mrs. Martino little guidance on how to address Monica's request for information on how she can best support Maria's transition to kindergarten. To meet the request, Mrs. Martino spends countless hours either researching the program resources and approach or developing her own resources or materials. When Mrs. Martino develops her own materials and processes, her approach may not be consistent with others that have been developed in different classrooms within the building, program, or other programs within the community.



## Situation 2

The local Head Start program has a policy and procedures in place that indicate that transition planning will occur with the family in the spring as part a special Parent – Teacher night. The procedures also indicate that as part of this event, the school district's personnel, including Kindergarten teachers will be invited to participate. At the transition meeting, the kindergarten teachers and school personnel are asked to provide information to the families on the process for enrolling children in the public school, special referral processes and a general overview of the types of services that can be provided.



## Situation 2

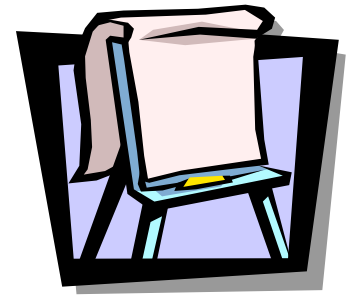
The local school system does not have policies or procedures in place that provide guidance on transition conferences or transition planning events that are hosted by outside agencies.



# The Result

The Kindergarten teachers and central office personnel for the district make every attempt to attend the Parent Teacher Night and transition event when invited. However, without a specific directive from their district, many are often unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts and prior commitments.

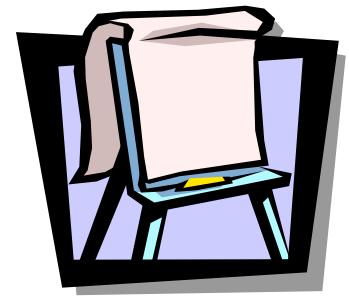




# In My Agency....

- Our agency policies and guidance documents were:
  - developed in consultation with other agencies and programs.
  - were a direct result of community discussions and planning related to transition.
  - were developed in house based on our identified needs and regulations
  - what policies and guidance documents?





## In My Agency....

- Staff follow our agency policies and guidance documents related to transition practices and activities.
- Staff implement a variety of transition strategies and activities, with limited or no written guidance to support and institutionalize those practices.
- Different staff use different transition strategies and activities.



# How Can We Support Congruency?

- Specific issues and strategies are discussed and negotiated by all members of the transition team.
- Specific decisions are made about how each program or agency will implement the practice in ways that are congruent and coordinated,
- Decisions by the team are formalized and or supported in with written guidance.





# In Other Words - Standard Practices

- Standard Practices means that all staff in the agency or program regularly implement the activity or practice.
- Why is this important???



# Putting It All Together



# Standard Practices

- Staff have **key information** about agencies and services available within the community.
- A **single contact** person for transition is identified within each agency.
- **Broad based transition activities** and timelines are identified (e.g., open house, child find).



# Standard Practices

- Processes are in place for
  - child and family based transition meetings.
  - enrollment and referral.
  - screenings and evaluations.
  - follow-up on children in transition.
  - ensure that staff and family members are actively involved in transition system design.



# Standard Practices

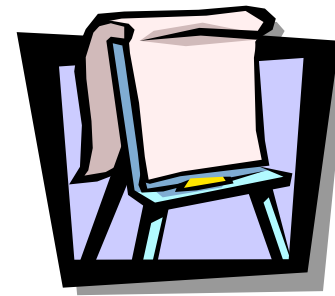
- Staff roles and responsibilities for transition activities are outlined.
- There is continuity in curriculum and child expectations.
- Methods are in place to support staff to staff communication.



# Standard Practices

- Information about children making a transition is shared.
- Individual transition plans are developed for each child and family.
- Children have opportunities to develop entry level skills they need to be successful in the receiving environment.





# Status of Practices Assessment

- What is the current status of practices within your [classroom, program, agency]?
- Record on page 1 - 3 of Activity and Form Packet

Transition Practice or Activity	Standard Practice in my agency	WITHIN MY AGENCY this practice is supported through:				ACROSS AGENCIES this practice is support through:		
		Policy	Procedure	Written Transition Plan	Technical Document	Agreement	Written Transition Plan	Technical Document
Staff know about the agencies and services available within the community for young children and families.								
A single contact person for transition is identified in each agency.								

# Framework for Formalizing Decisions and Actions

- Use of Written Guidance
- Collaborative Development of Written Guidance Materials
- Negotiating and Developing Transition Activities and Processes





# Why Written Guidance

- Formalize transition practices to support congruency and institutionalization within programs and across agencies.



# What is Written Guidance

- Transition Plans
  - List strategies and activities being implemented to meet identified transition needs, and include timelines, persons responsible, and how the activity will be evaluated.



# What is Written Guidance

- Interagency Agreements
  - provide guidelines and information on how agencies are working together to support the transition process, including responsibilities and resource allocations.
- Technical Documents
  - provide detailed and technical information on how a specific practice or activity can be implemented, including strategies and tasks to be completed.



# What Is Written Guidance?

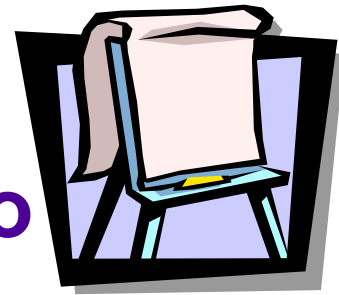
- Policies
  - written statements that provide guidance on actions that need to be taken to achieve desired outcomes.
- Procedures
  - guidance on how to implement a specific policy.





- | Transition Practice or Activity  | Standard Practice in my agency | WITHIN MY AGENCY<br>this practice is supported through: |           |                         |                    | ACROSS AGENCIES<br>this practice is support through: |                         |                    |
|--|--------------------------------|---|-----------|-------------------------|--------------------|--|-------------------------|--------------------|
|  |                                | Policy  | Procedure | Written Transition Plan | Technical Document | Agreement  | Written Transition Plan | Technical Document |
| Staff know about the agencies and services available within the community for young children and families. |                                |   |           |                         |                    |  |                         |                    |
| A single contact person for transition is identified in each agency.                                       |                                |   |           |                         |                    |  |                         |                    |

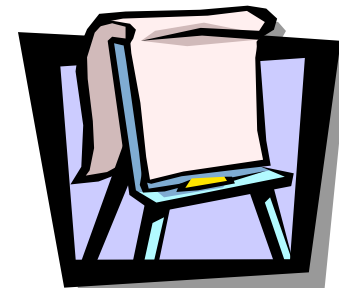
# Connecting Transition Practices to Desired Outcomes



- What are your [classroom, school, program or community's] desired outcomes?
  - Record on page 4 of Activity and Forms Packet
- What is the Conceptual Model of Transition that best fits your program, philosophy, community?



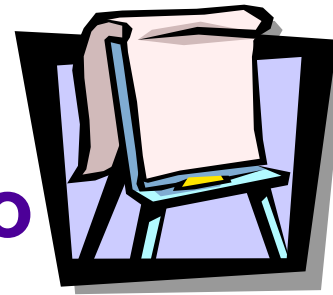
# Linking Transition Outcomes, Practices, and Strategies



Transition Outcomes	Transition Practices	Transition Strategies



# Connecting Transition Practices to Desired Outcomes

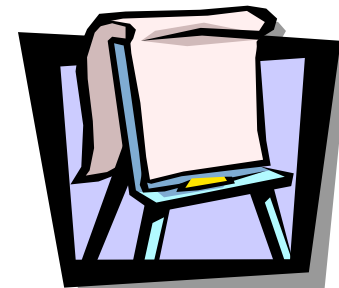


- Based on this information, identify 2-3 practices that hold the best promise for helping you reach your identified outcomes and are supported by your conceptual model





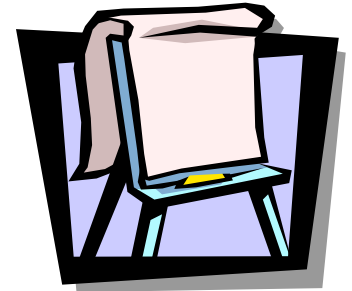
# Linking Transition Outcomes, Practices, and Strategies



Transition Outcomes	Transition Practices	Transition Strategies



# Choosing Strategies to Support Transition Practices



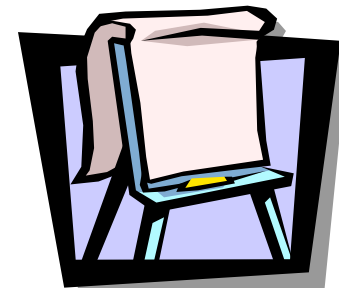
- At your Table, identify potential strategies for implementing your assigned Standard Practice
- Resources:
  - Handout Packet
  - Your own experience with transition

**Methods are in place to support staff to staff communication.**

1. Teachers visit receiving program classrooms
2. Cross Agency Training
3. Teachers participate in joint work groups
4. Follow-up packets for children



# Linking Transition Outcomes, Practices, and Strategies



Transition Outcomes	Transition Practices	Transition Strategies



# Additional Resources

- IDEA and Head Start Transition Requirements
- Resources of Interest from NECTC
- Web sites of Interest



# Next Steps/Final Thoughts:

- Transition does not occur in isolation – build a community team.
- Know where you are headed before you choose your path – identify transition outcomes first and then align transition practices and strategies.
- Small successes can lead to BIG change – be mindful of selecting manageable goals to make significant change for the children and families in your community.
- Determine and monitor your progress along the way – Baseline assessment, continuous monitoring, and evaluation data will be provide meaningful information and validation of your efforts.

